

**ISLAND COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS – REGULAR SESSION
SEPTEMBER 26, 2012**

The Island County Council of Governments met in regular session on September 26, 2012 in the Commissioners' Hearing Room 102B, located at 1 NE 6th St., Coupeville. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Nancy Conard at 9:00 a.m.

The Council of Governments Minutes and recordings of meetings may be located at <http://www.islandcounty.net/commissioners/cog/2012/>

Members Present: Nancy Conard, Mayor, Town of Coupeville
Helen Price Johnson, Island County Commissioner
Kelly Emerson, Island County Commissioner
Angie Homola, Island County Commissioner
Randy Heston for Larry Kwarsick, Mayor, City of Langley
Curt Gordon, Commissioner, South Whidbey Port District
Scott Dudley, Mayor, City of Oak Harbor

Members Absent: Benye Weber, Commissioner, Coupeville Port District

Also Present: Sherrye Wyatt, Island County Tourism
Ron Nelson, Island County Economic Development Council
Jackie Henderson, Island County Human Services
Beth Plush, Island County Human Services
Andrea Thomas, Island County Human Services
Charlene Ray, Island County Human Services
Colleen Keller, Utsalady Elementary School
Scott Mauk, South Whidbey High School
Students and Community Members

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nancy Conard called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2012 regular meeting. The August 22, 2012 meeting minutes were approved.

SUSTAINABLE WHIDBEY COALITION

Vouchers for Sustainable Whidbey Coalition were provided. It was moved and seconded to approve the SWC vouchers. Motion carried. Commissioner Emerson abstained.

ISLAND COUNTY TOURISM UPDATE – Sherrye Wyatt

Sherrye Wyatt presented an update on Island County Tourism. Tourism is up 8% from a year ago. Sherrye handed out copies of a monthly report and a packet of information that included the new visitors guide and map. The map is available on the ferries. They are getting a good reaction to the visitors guide which will be continually updated. A merchant on Camano Island was so impressed with the map that he asked if he could blow up the Camano Island portion and make it a wall side piece that he has displayed at his business and at Cama Beach.

Sherrye also provided a travel impact and visitor volume report prepared by Dean Runyan Associates that includes a comparison of the impact of tourism on the state's economy and that of Island County. Ron Nelson from the Island County Economic Development was asked to do an analysis of this report

and what it means to our local economy. Sherrye went on to say that although the economy in Island County may not be doing well it doesn't necessarily impact tourism and associated jobs and those continue to do well despite the economy.

Ron Nelson went through his analysis of the report on Island County tourism prepared by Dean Runyan and Associates specifically in terms of what it means to jobs and employment in Island County. He concluded that employment in tourism does not have a direct link to total employment.

It was noted that a significant number of visitors to Whidbey and Camano Islands stay in private homes rather than lodging and this was compared to another rural county that had the opposite. The conclusion is that people think they have to know someone here to come and stay and perhaps this is an area that could be developed into a campaign to attract visitors to stay in hotels. The good news is that tourism in Island County has continued to climb in the past 3 years. They are working more with coalitions including the ferries, North Cascades Loop, other regional counties, Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Washington Tourism Alliance on marketing campaigns to attract visitors. As an example Island County is the Island part of the Cascades Loop that takes visitors over the North Cascades highway and they are using grant money from WSDOT to do marketing and PR for the loop.

Island County Tourism is updating their website adding new tools and hope to have it done by October 24 because that day they will be having a workshop for lodging members to teach them all about the tools created with the website. The website averages 400-600 visitors a day. Sherrye showed several of the videos that they made highlighting Island County as a tourist destination. She also showed a video about the new zipline on Camano Island. They are expanding marketing efforts.

HUMAN SERVICES UPDATE – Jackie Henderson

Jackie Henderson, Director of Island County Human Services, gave a presentation on the overall responsibilities of Human Services. She explained that they provide many services and programs for the entire County. She focused her presentation on a couple of programs that are funded by the 1/10 of 1% - Mental Health and Substance Abuse Sales Tax. She brought several of her staff to speak about the High School Based Mental Health Program and the Crisis Intervention Training Program. The Veterans Assistance Program will not be covered because the coordinator for that program is out of town.

In 2005 there was legislation passed that gave counties the authority to raise the sales tax 1/10 of 1% to fund new and expanded mental health and chemical dependency community services. Island County was the 3rd county in the state to pass the tax in 2006 after a citizen task force met and looked all the data and what the needs were and what programs we might want to start. The County Commissioners passed it unanimously in August of 2006. Collection of the tax began in 2007 and implementation some of the programs started later that year. In addition to the School Based Mental Health Program and the Counseling Connections program tax monies also fund Family Treatment Court in the adult and juvenile drug court, vulnerable adult outreach program, expanding early childhood mental health, school based mental health, chemical dependency in high schools and crisis intervention training.

School Based Mental Health Program

Charlene Ray, Coordinator of the School Based Mental Health Program, gave an overview of that program which is collaboration between the 4 school districts. The districts report that it is one of the best collaborations they have ever had. The program model is based on the school social work model rather a treatment model. They do family counseling, mediation, crisis intervention and classroom presentations that cover a full range of issues from bullying, child abuse, and drug/alcohol prevention. They have 8 counselors that serve 17 schools. The County has memos of understanding with the districts and the staff working in the schools are Island County employees.

Colleen Keller, Principal at Utsalady Elementary School and Scott Mauk, Assistant Principal/Athletic Director of South Whidbey High School talked about how the School Based Mental Health Program has helped their students.

Counseling Connection Program (CCP)

Offers counseling services to those who are not on Medicaid and do not have insurance by contracting with private therapists. It is estimated that 15%-20% of Island County residents do not have any kind of health insurance. Beth Plush gave an overview of this community counseling program which began in spring of 2010. They have 35 participating licensed counselors and those residents who qualify for counseling based on having no insurance and income can choose their counselor.

AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

Due to the Joint Skagit-Island RTPO Meeting on October 24 to be held at Deception Pass State Park, it was decided not to hold a COG meeting on that date. The next COG meeting will be November 28, 2012.

OTHER ITEMS OF MUTUAL INTEREST

Commissioner Helen Price Johnson stated that the Department of Ecology is updating the Oil Spill Contingency Plan Rule and she received a letter from San Juan County Council of their comments and was reminded that the comment period ends on October 4th. She provided members a copy of the letter.

Chair Nancy Conard thanked Ron Nelson for his presentation at the last COG meeting. COG members should be receiving in the day or two invitations to the Sustainable Whidbey Coalition Fall Forum to be held on October 25th.

Commissioner Helen Price Johnson thank today's presenters.

Chair Conard adjourned the meeting at 10:58 a.m.

Dated this 26th day of September, 2012.

Approved